

Maggie McDonnell
Instructional Strategies
Journal #1
August 2005

Reflections

I enjoyed the first few classes of the IS course. Granted, part of me was distracted by course planning and getting settled at a new college; on the other hand, in retrospect I appreciated the chance to be back in the classroom, on one side of the desk or the other, a few days before the influx of students begins. Having a chance to interact in that setting, preparing the concept map, buying books – even the simple act of finding an unused notebook – all these helped me focus mentally. Even with the reading and concept map, I found myself eager to work on my own courses.

I got a lot out of the concept map in particular. As I mentioned in my preamble during my presentation, I chose to work with a course I have never taught before; preparing the concept map helped me a great deal in forming a clearer semestrial concept for the course. In fact, the exercise helped so much that I prepared concept maps for my other courses, even though both were a lot more solidly formed already.

I love the atmosphere in the class. This is my third Performa course, beginning with the CTIC course in January 2005, and a fair number of our classmates are from that original cohort; it's always great to see them again, and just as good to meet new people and get fresh perspectives.

For me, only negative aspect of the first three classes was the lack of time; we rushed through a lot of material and didn't get to other material simply because we had such a lot

to cover in such a short span of time. I'm sure others have mentioned the fact that we crammed in a lot of reading between the first and second class, but ran out of time and never discussed the readings. In particular, I wanted to discuss Chapter 13. I found a lot of interesting ideas in this chapter, and had a few questions. For instance, while it's obviously necessary to be sensitive to cultural influences, isn't it possible to hide behind them, as a student or as a teacher? In other words, it seems to me that there is a danger that bad performance or negative attitude will be summarily dismissed as cultural miscommunication, rather than addressed and corrected. As a culturally sensitive teacher, am I expected to accept from a culturally distinct student a form of behaviour that I would not accept from a cultural peer? I do hope that we have a chance to discuss the readings eventually; of course, given the packed schedule, I suspect that such a chance is not great.

Overall, my impression of the first three days of the course is very positive, and I am looking forward to a semester of stimulating discussion and much learning.